

**COPING BAHAVIOR FOR UNHAPPY CHILDHOOD
IN JEAN WEBSTER'S *DADDY-LONG-LEGS* (1912):
AN INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**



PUBLICATION ARTICLE
Submitted as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For Getting Bachelor Degree of Education
In Department of English Education

by:
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MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF SURAKARTA
2014

**COPING BEHAVIOR FOR UNHAPPY CHILDHOOD
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ABSTRACT

*This research paper examines coping behavior for unhappy childhood of Jerusha Abbott in Jean Webster's *Daddy-Long-Legs* novel using Adler's individual psychology. The objective of the research is to analyze Jerusha Abbott's psychological condition in coping behavior for her unhappy childhood using individual psychological perspective. This research belongs to qualitative research in which the data source of the research is taken from words and written texts. There are two kinds of data source; primary and secondary data source. The primary data source is taken from *Daddy-Long-Legs* novel, and the secondary data source is taken from books, journals, articles, reviews, comments, and other relevant data. The method in analyzing the data is descriptive analysis. The conclusion of the research is based on the individual psychological analysis of the novel, it can be concluded that the author illustrates a psychological phenomenon in the novel in which the character experience unhappy childhood. In coping for her unhappy childhood, she uses her creative self so that she can reach happiness in her life.*

Keyword: coping behavior, unhappy childhood, orphan, orphanage, individual psychology.

A. Introduction

Childhood is a very important period in development of human behavior. Children are born innocent. They are formed by the society around them. Maier states that child development is not merely a matter of individual growth; social affair affects a lot on it (1978: 5). The first society for children is their family. Thus, children are formed by their family, especially their parents. The way parents educate their children affects one's behavior very much. However, orphans childhood period is more complicated. It is more complicated because orphans are not educated by family, but by institution. Pappas (2012) says, the research finds that institutionalization in the early beginning of childhood can change a child's brain and behavior on eventual. Children need not only food, but also psychological nurturance from adult caregivers. But in the orphanage, they get less psychological nurturance. Otherwise, they have to eat at the same time, bathe at the same time, and go to bed at the same time. Moreover they have to wear same clothes which sometimes are second-hand clothes.

Childhood period in orphanage can result unhappy childhood. It worsens since unhappy childhood can affect one's life for a long time. Some traumatic and unhappy events cannot be vanished easily by them which can make them afraid of doing or facing something in the future. One's behavior in coping for their unhappy childhood is important in order to make better future for them.

Daddy-Long-Legs is one of novels which draws about an orphan's life. This novel describes how Jerusha Abbot, as the main character of the novel copes for her unhappy childhood inside the orphanage to face the real world outside the orphanage. It describes the way the main character eventually finds her happiness although she experiences unhappy childhood.

This study uses Adler's individual psychology as the perspective in analyzing the novel. Individual psychology is considered as suitable theory to analyze the issue in *Daddy-Long-Legs* novel because it regards individual as an organized entity. "Individual psychology shows that an individual behaves

as a unity in which their mind, feeling, action, dream, memory, and physiology moves to the same direction” (Semiun, 2013: 209). It also views human being as essentially social creature and the need for superiority and relate to others were primary (Hall and Lindzey, 1985: 143). Hence, it is considered to be able to analyze the issue of coping behavior for unhappy childhood in *Daddy-Long-Legs* novel.

The problem statement of this study is how Jerusha Abbot copes for her unhappy childhood in the orphanage to face the real world outside the orphanage which reflected in Jean Webster’s *Daddy-Long-Legs* novel. The objectives of the study are to analyze the novel based on its structural element and Jerusha Abbott’s psychological condition in coping behavior for her unhappy childhood using individual psychological perspective.

Beside this study, there are two journals which also use *Daddy-Long-Legs* novel as the object of study. First is by Anne K. Phillips (1999) entitled “*Yours most loquaciously*”: Voice in Jean Webster’s *Daddy-Long-Legs*. In this journal, the author examined *Daddy-Long-Legs* novel which explained an orphan sent to college by unknown benefactor. It provides detailed review of *Daddy-Long-Legs* novel. Second is by Karen A. Keely (2004) entitled *Teaching Eugenics to Children: Heredity and Reform in Jean Webster’s Daddy-Long-Legs and Dear Enemy*. In this journal, Keely provides a prudent historical contextualization of the ways in which Jean Webster’s *Daddy-Long-Legs* and *Dear Enemy* use the adventures in home for orphans to enter public discussion and debate relating to the use of eugenics.

B. Research Method

The type of this study is descriptive qualitative research. It needs library research and the data sources are taken from words and other written texts. The object of the study is *Daddy-Long-Legs* novel wrote by Jean Webster in 1912. There are two kinds of data source; primary and secondary. The primary data source is taken from *Daddy-Long-Legs* novel, and the secondary data source is taken from other sources such as books, articles, reviews, comments, and other relevant data. The technique in collecting the

data is by reading the novel for several times, discovering and collecting the secondary data sources, taking notes of important parts in both primary and secondary data sources, classifying and determining the relevant data, and the last taking notes from the material and some other resources related to the novel and the analysis. The technique in data analysis is descriptive analysis. It analyzes the structural elements of the novel and the individual psychological perspective of the work.

C. Findings and Discussion

1. Findings

This study uses Adler's individual psychology in analyzing the novel. The theory has six basic concepts as follows:

a. Inferiority Feeling and Compensation

According to Sidiq (2012: 2) Adler convinces that humans are born with inferiority feeling comes along with them. Adler states (in Feist, 1985: 71) that all humans are "blessed" at birth with small, weak, and inferior bodies. These physical imperfections inflame feelings of completion or wholeness. People are continually pushed by the need to overcome inferiority feelings and pulled by the desire for completion.

Jerusha Abbott has many inferiority feeling since she experienced unhappy childhood in the orphanage. Her first inferiority feeling is the fact that she has no family. She is very longing to have a family. She often pretends that Daddy-Long-Legs is her family. She did it to comfort herself that having a feeling of being owned is better than the feeling of loneliness. The second inferiority feeling is her ignorance of her origin. She never knows who she is, from where her origin is, and what tribe she is. She was left behind in the orphanage when she was a baby. The third is her poor education in the orphanage. She never gets proper education since she has to complete her duty taking cares younger orphan in the orphanage. The fourth is her lack of experience. She has lack experience because she never leaves the asylum for 17 years she lived. The fifth inferiority feeling is her bad name. She does not like her name. Her

matron gives that name and she gets it from a telephone book and tombstone. Lastly is Jerusha's unhappy experience in the orphanage. When she was in the orphanage, she often gets punished when doing mistake. She also has to wear dreadful clothes that are donated from others.

b. Fictional Finalism

Fictional finalism is something all human are trying to reach and strive for. According to Adler (1956), people strive toward a final goal of either personal superiority or the goal of success for all humankind. In either case, the final goal is fictional and has no objective existence. Nevertheless, that final goal has great significance because it unifies personality and renders all behavior comprehensible (Feist, 1985: 70).

Just like the other ordinary girls, Jerusha's fictional finalism is to get happiness in her life. To realize it, Jerusha manages some goals. The first goal is being an author. Second, she desires to complete her study in college with good achievements. Third, persuaded by her unhappy childhood in the orphanage, she has an aspiration to reform education in orphanage. She believes that if she can attain those goals, she will feel the happiness.

c. Striving for Superiority

Striving for superiority is the reaction of overcoming the inferiority feeling. According to Adler (in Feist, 1985: 70) individual psychology holds that everyone begins life with physical imperfection that activate feelings of inferiority, feelings that motivate a person to strive for either superiority or success. Psychologically unhealthy individuals strive for personal superiority, whereas healthy people seek for all humanity. In (Hjelle and Ziegler, 1992: 143) Adler asserts that the striving for superiority is the fundamental law of human life, a something without which life would be unthinkable.

In striving for superiority, Jerusha performs several ways. Firstly, she chase after her education in college. She also strives to be equal to

other girls in social and lifestyle case. In social case, she hides her identity as an orphan in order to be equal to others. In lifestyle case, she tries to emulate her friends' lifestyle by buying clothes and other stuffs. Then she strives to become an author. She also strives to get scholarship based on her achievement, not based on the mercy from other. She did it because she will feel more respectable if she gets scholarship based on her achievement. Then she strives to be an independent woman. She wants to freely make her own decision about what she will be and do in her life.

d. Social Interest

Social interest can be described as an attitude of relatedness with people in general as well as empathy for each member of the human community. It shows itself as cooperation with others for social advancement rather than for personal gain. Social interest is the natural condition of the human species and the adhesive that binds society together (Feist, 1985: 75). Johansen (2010: 28) states that social interest is the emotion of having something in common with others, a feeling of belonging and connectedness to one's community.

Jerusha Abbott has enormous social interest. It indicated that she has mental health. She easily gets along to others. She is not a fastidious person. She cares much to other people who need help. She is also active in woman suffrage. Then she is interested in socialism and wants to be a socialist.

e. Style of Life

Style of life is term Adler uses to refer to the flavor of a person's life. It includes a person's goal, self-concept, feeling for others, and an attitude toward the world. It is the product of the interaction of heredity, environment, and a person's creative power (Feist, 1985: 78). Style of life is a person's consistent way of striving. The basis of it is the feeling of inferiority and compensation. Hjelle and Ziegler (1992: 145) assert that style of life is a set of behaviors designed to compensate for inferiority.

Jerusha belongs to a socially useful type because she actively struggles to solve the problem of life. Jerusha's styles of life are as follows. Firstly, she regularly corresponds with Daddy-Long-Legs. Secondly, she is fond of clothes. After 18 years wearing gingham, she becomes very fond of clothes. She believes that there is nothing more pleasing things for girl than having beautiful clothes. Thirdly, she hides her identity as an orphan. She did it in order to be equal to others. And the last she is not willing to accept charity more than she need. She will feel indebted if she accepts it.

f. Creative Self

According to Hjelle and Ziegler (1992: 150), Adler maintained that the style of life is formed by the person's creative power. Each person is empowered with the liberty to make their own life-style. At last, people are solely responsible for who they are and how they behave. This creative power is responsible for the person's life goal, establishes the way of striving for the goal, and donates to the development of social interest. It also dominates the person's perception, memories, fantasies, and dreams. It makes each person a free self-determined individual.

Jerusha's creative self is the way she overcoming her unhappy childhood and troubles in college. She forms a new personality which leads her to a good personality. Although at the beginning of college she often remembers her unhappy childhood in the orphanage, but as time goes by, her feeling toward John Grier Home increasingly softened. She can live her life without a phantom from her past. She believes that happiness is not that what the world presented to us, but how we present the happiness toward world. It means that happiness already exist in ourselves if we want to find it out and share it to the world.

2. Discussion

The discussion elaborates the relation between literature and psychology based on Wellek and Warren's *Theory of Literature*. According to Wellek and Warren (1956) the study of the psychological

types and laws present within works of literature belongs in the strictest sense to literary study. It judges the characters in the novel to be psychologically true.

The discussion explains how the theory fit to the figure and situation in the novel. It analyzes the main character's psychological condition on the issue of coping behavior for unhappy childhood using Adler's individual psychology. Individual psychology is considered as suitable theory to be applied in the research because it regards individual as an organized entity. It views human being as a social creature and the need for superiority and relate to others were primary. Hence it is considered to be able to analyze the psychological phenomenon in the novel.

In analyzing Jerusha Abbott's psychological condition in *Daddy-Long-legs* novel on the issue of coping behavior for unhappy childhood, the researcher uses six basic assumptions that are presented by individual psychology. Those basic assumptions are inferiority feeling and compensation, fictional finalism, striving for superiority, social interest, style of life and creative self. Those basic assumptions are related each other and supported one another in analyzing the psychological phenomenon in *Daddy-Long-Legs* novel.

Jerusha's unhappy childhood is her inferiority feeling. There are several inferiority feelings illustrated in the novel. Her first inferiority feeling is the fact that she has no family. The second inferiority feeling is her ignorance of her origin. The third is her poor education in the orphanage. The fourth is her lack of experience. The fifth inferiority feeling is her bad name. Lastly is Jerusha's unhappy experience in the orphanage.

After having inferiority feeling to be compensated, she has fictional finalism to be reached for. Her fictional finalism is to get happiness in her life. And to realize it, she manages some goals. Firstly, she wants to be an author. Secondly, she desires to complete her study in

college with good achievements. Thirdly, persuaded by her unhappy childhood in the orphanage, she has an aspiration to reform education in orphanage. She plans it in detail that she will have a qualified home for orphan in the future. She believes that if she can attain those goals, she will feel the happiness.

To cope for her unhappy childhood, and to reach happy life afterward, Jerusha performs several ways that are drawn in her striving for superiority, social interest, style of life and creative self. *Firstly*, she strives to get superior. To get superior, she chase after her education in college. She also strives to be equal to other girls in social and lifestyle case. In social case, she hides her identity as an orphan in order to be equal to others. In lifestyle case, she tries to emulate her friends' lifestyle by buying clothes and other stuffs. Then she strives to become an author. She also strives to get scholarship based on her achievement, not based on the mercy from other. She did it because she will feel more respectable if she gets scholarship based on her achievement. Then she strives to be an independent woman. She is longing to fund her own self without the support from Daddy-Long-Legs. She also wants to freely make her own decision about what she will be and do in her life.

Secondly, Jerusha's performance in coping behavior for her unhappy childhood is drawn through her social interest. Jerusha has a vigorous social interest. She easily gets along to others. She is not a fastidious person. She cares much to other people who need help. She is also active in woman suffrage. Then she is interested in socialism and wants to be a socialist. Jerusha's social interest proves that she has a healthy mental because she likes to get along with others and also puts a great concern on others.

Thirdly, Jerusha cope for her unhappy childhood through her style of life. Jerusha Abbott's style of life is as follows; firstly, she regularly corresponds to Daddy-Long-legs. She did it not only to fulfill her obligation to send letter once a month to Daddy-Long-legs, but also to

share her experience and feeling to someone. Secondly, she is fond of clothes. After 18 years wearing gingham, she becomes very fond of clothes. She believes that there is nothing more pleasing things for girl than having beautiful clothes. Thirdly, she hides her identity as an orphan. She did it in order to be equal to others. And the last she is not willing to accept charity more than she need. She will feel indebted if she accepts it. Jerusha's style of life proves that she belongs to a socially useful type because she actively struggles to solve the problems of life.

Lastly, Jerusha's performance in coping for her unhappy childhood is through her creative self. Jerusha's creative self is the way she overcoming her unhappy childhood and troubles in college. She forms a new personality which leads her to a good personality. She then considers that her unhappy childhood in the orphanage is not an obstacle for her life. She is no longer feeling that her childhood was snatched away. She prefers to consider it as unusual experience she has to be grateful to. She believes that happiness is not that what the world presented to her, but how she presents the happiness toward world. It means that happiness already exist in herself if she want to find it out and share it to the world.

From the explanation above, it can be seen that based on Wellek and Warren's *Theory of Literature* concerning the relation between literature and psychology, the author illustrates a psychological phenomenon in *Daddy-Long-Legs* novel in which the main character of the novel coping behavior for her unhappy childhood. She can overcome her inferiority feeling and reach for her fictional finalism. It shows that the figure and situation in the literary work might be psychologically true.

D. Conclusions and Implications

Based on the individual psychological analysis of the novel, it can be concluded that in this novel the author illustrates a psychological phenomenon in which the character experience unhappy childhood. Individual psychology is considered to be able to explain the psychological

phenomenon in *Daddy-Long-Legs* novel because it views human being as an organized entity. Through the major character's psychological condition, the researcher uses six basic concepts of individual psychology to analyze it. Unhappy childhood is the character's inferiority feeling. And to get happiness is her fictional finalism. To cope for her inferiority feeling and to reach for her fictional finalism, she strives for superiority. The striving for superiority forms her style of life and influences her social interest. Finally, through her creative self, she realizes that happiness is already inside herself. The only thing she has to do is to create and emerge the happiness in her life.

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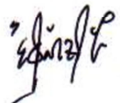
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